**11. On a scale of 1 to 10, where *1 is not important at all* and *10 is very important*, how important are the following MicroLink services to you?**

☐ Bulletin Board
☐ Electronic mail
☐ ExpertLink
☐ Financial services
☐ FloraLink
☐ Newsbytes
☐ Overseas gateways
☐ Shop Window
☐ Telex
☐ Telemessages
☐ Telesoftware
☐ Travel services
☐ WeatherLink

**12. Which computer do you use to log on to MicroLink?**

☐ PC ☐ PCW ☐ CPC ☐ Apple ☐ Mac
☐ BBC ☐ Electron ☐ Atari ☐ Atari ST ☐ Other

**13. Which comms program do you use?**

_____

**14. Which modem do you use?**

_____

**15. Which baud rate do you use?**

☐ 1200/75 ☐ 300/300 ☐ 1200/1200

**16. How do you call MicroLink?**

☐ Direct ☐ Via Debenhams ☐ Via PSS

**17. Which other online services do you use regularly?**

☐ Compunet ☐ One-to-One ☐ Cix
☐ MercuryLink ☐ Prestel

**18. Are there any features of the MicroLink service you would like to see improved?** Please provide full details (on a separate sheet if necessary).

_____
_____
_____

**19. Can you think of other services (existing or imaginary) you would like to see on MicroLink?**

_____
_____
_____
_____

**20. Are there any further points you would like to make about any aspect of the MicroLink service?** Please use a separate sheet if necessary.

_____
_____
_____

***Please send this completed form to:***

***MicroLink Survey, FREEPOST, Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP.***

**NO STAMP NEEDED**

## One liners

MANY MicroLink users know of the CHAT facility, which allows you to "talk" in real time with others on the system. You simply key >**chat** plus the identity of the person you want to contact (for instance >**chat MAG-1234567**), and your micro becomes a kind of visual telephone – what you type appears on your screen at the same time as on the screen of your correspondent, and vice versa.

But the problem with CHAT is that if someone "calls" you, the message interrupts whatever you happen to be doing. It can be frustrating if you're trying to read your mail or whatever, suddenly to read "Hello Gab,how's it going?" – all very nice if you're feeling chatty, but a nuisance if you're busy.

There is a command, however, which lets you send a one-line note in real time, but which will not interrupt your correspondent until he or she is back at the MicroLink chevron (>) prompt.

The command is **message** plus a MicroLink identity. You key >**message MAG1234567** and press Enter or Return. MicroLink then waits for you to key in your message (there's no *Text:* prompt). After you have done so, the text is sent to the central computer, but then held until the correspondent is no longer busy (or if already at the chevron prompt, until the next action has been completed).

So, if you suspect that the person you want to contact might be irritated by the sudden appearance of some spurious text, use **message** first –something like:

>**message 1234567 <CR>**
Hi Martin. Are you busy? Want to chat? Gab<**CR**>
>

If you wish, you can check first that the person you want to contact is on the system with the **online** command. If he or she is there, you will not get any direct confirmation that your message has been sent but when the chevron prompt reappears, you can take it that it has. However, you don't even have to perform a check, since if your correspondent is not there, MicroLink will inform you after your message has been keyed in.

In that case, I'm afraid, it disappears forever down a black hole, but it can be just as quick (or even quicker) to send a one-liner as to wait for MicroLink to check who is online – another advantage of the **message** command.

***Gabriel Jacobs***

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MicroLink NEWSLETTER

*No. 7* *July 1988*

## Getting the telemessage across

WHEN you want to send a telemessage, it's easy to assume that you have to type it online. However, this approach can make the process more time-consuming, more difficult to correct and generally more complicated (you have to insert your own carriage returns for example).

If your communication is longer than a couple of paragraphs, the best technique is to treat it rather like an ordinary email message. Composing both the address and message sections offline, then uploading them while you are online.

Your ordinary wordprocessor and comms software can be used to do this, but make sure you set the line length to 69 characters or less. Also check that the message is no more than 34 lines or 350 characters – whichever comes first. With many wordprocessors you should also use unjustified text throughout.

The recipient's address, your address and the message sections should each be prepared in a separate file. They can then be uploaded in sequence as the appropriate TO:, FROM: and MESSAGE: prompts are displayed. When preparing the addresses, make sure that they adhere to the following format:

| | |
|---|---|
| Name | (43 characters max) |
| Address Line 1 | (43 characters max) |
| Address Line 2 | (43 characters max) |
| POSTAL TOWN | (43 characters max) |
| County | (32 characters max) |
| Post Code | (10 characters max) |

You will probably find that the uploaded addresses run ahead of the line prompts, but don't worry – the system will still work.

Send the telemessage at the normal "send" baud rate permitted by your particular modem. For example if it is a 1275/300, use the 300 baud setting. Finally dispatch it in the normal way, with a **.S** on a new line.

## Bulletin board categories

IT'S not surprising that most bulletin boards users learn to operate the service intuitively. After all, it's almost as user-friendly as the average office notice board. However, the hit-and-miss approach can neglect some of the more helpful command elements.

One invaluable short-cut which is sometimes overlooked is the facility to display only the categories you are interested in, whenever you access the board. You can establish your own pre-selected list by using the **BB>C** (for categories) command at the bulletin board Main Menu.

This will firstly display all the categories that are currently available on the BB. It then invites you to choose either those areas you are likely to want to access in the future, or simply maintain the list as it is. You can then make your final choice, which will be permanently recorded as a default list on your ID file like this:

```
Available Categories
A> MUG              B> CHAT LINE        C> CONTACTS         D> COMMUNICATIONS
E> JOKES            F> POSTERS          G> OPEN UNIVERSITY  H> FARMING          I> AIRLINK
J> ATARI ST USER    K> MUSICTEL         L> DATING           M> COMPUTER JOBS
N> BUSINESS ADS     O> FOR SALE         P> WANTED           R> AMSTRAD
S> APPLE            T> ATARI            U> BBC ELECTRON     V> COMMODORE
W> IBM PC ETC       X> SINCLAIR         Y> OTHER HOME COMPS Z> PROGRAM LISTINGS
Currently Selected areas: D
Access which areas <CR>=No change or ALL asterix
Selected areas: ADRW
Save these permanently (<CR>=NO)? Y
Done
```

The next time you consult the BB to read the latest entries, you can key **SCan** as usual, and your search will list only the message titles in your chosen default categories.

## TeleShopping

THESE days we are all assured that shopping has become a prime leisure activity – nothing remotely like the gruelling ordeal endured by harassed housewives in the past. Yet in spite of the growth of hypermarkets, tempting shopping malls and the convenience of plastic money there are still many drawbacks.

Parking, travel time, absent assistants, check-out queues, search time, and limited opening hours can still conspire to make modern shopping a tedious chore. Its therefore well worth having a look at one of MicroLink's more convenient services – the Shop Window. By keying **>SW** you will access a handy, 24 hour retailing facility that stocks quality goods and services from leading companies, at competitive prices.

Once inside the electronic store you can use any of the following commands:

| | |
|---|---|
| **>S(can** | lists all entries |
| **>S BA** | lists all companies starting with BA |
| **>S F-** | lists all companies from F to Z |
| **>S C-G** | lists all companies from C to G |
| **>nn** | selects company nn and displays the product range |
| **>O(rder** | selects order form for company selected |
| **>O nn** | directly accesses order form for company nn if they have one |

Keying **S** for **Scan** for example, will list the 42 companies that are currently participating in the scheme. They deal primarily in computer-related products and you will find that each one has a number that can be keyed to display its particular wares.

You will be asked if paging is required. If **YES**, the list will be displayed a page at a time. If **NO**, it will quickly scroll from beginning to end. Don't forget that you can freeze it at any any time by keying **CONTROL S** and restart by keying **CONTROL Q**.

When you've decided on a purchase, key **O** for the onscreen order form. This only requires basic information like your credit card details, phone number and delivery address, together with the quantity, description and unit price of the required goods. If the selected company doesn't have a form option, you can send your order by the MicroLink Email service, as all listed companies have their own mailboxes.

## Online Help

MICROLINK subscribers now have a brand-new, Online User Guide to help them explore the many different commands and functions that the service has to offer. Important sections like electronic mail, telex and comms software are already complete, and the remaining gaps will be filled shortly.

The guide will ultimately contain additional categories that explain everything from how the internal filing system works, access methods via the telecommunications network, access addresses, kermit, requests, telesoftware, to the bulletin board, set up and general system information.

The guide is fully indexed, and each item has its own short code so that specific information can be located quickly. The new electronic oracle can be consulted by keying **>HELP**.

## *MicroLink user survey*

SO that we can continue to provide you with the service you want, we would be very grateful if you would take a minute or two to complete the questions below. The respondent of the first completed questionnaire to be pulled from the tub will receive one month's free use of MicroLink.

Please send your completed questionnaire, FREEPOST, by **Monday August 8.** The address is at the foot of the next page.

**1. What is your:**

Age_____ Occupation_____

**2. What is your MAG number?**_____

**3. In which TV region do you live?**

☐ Grampian ☐ STV ☐ Border ☐ Granada
☐ Yorkshire ☐ Tyne Tees ☐ Central ☐ Anglia
☐ TV South ☐ Thames/LWT ☐ TSW ☐ HTV (West)
☐ HTV (Wales) ☐ Ulster ☐ Any other_____

**4. For how long have you been a subscriber to MicroLink?**

☐ Less than 1 month ☐ 1-6 months
☐ 6 months – 1 year ☐ 1-2 years

**5. How frequently do you log on to MicroLink?**

☐ Every day ☐ About twice a month
☐ About twice a week ☐ About once a month
☐ Less frequently than once a month

**6. What proportion of your log-on time do you spend on:**

Business use_____ Other use_____

**7. In terms of *business use*, which MicroLink services do you use, and in which ways?**

_____
_____
_____

**8. In terms of *other use*, which MicroLink services do you use, and in which ways?**

_____
_____
_____

**9. What advantages do you find from using Email?**

☐ Can leave messages when people are out
☐ Can send documents in electronic format
☐ Email is much cheaper than voice
☐ Any others_____

**10. Who do you use electronic mail to communicate with?**

☐ Colleagues from your company
☐ People in other companies
☐ Other groups/individuals _____